

Southwest Area Mobilization Guide
Chapter 20 - Administrative Procedures
Section 26 • Preparedness Levels

26.1 Overview of the Southwest Area Preparedness Level Plan

A. Purpose. Wildland fire management agencies are directed to protect life, property, and the natural and cultural resources they manage. This requires attention to the availability and use of firefighting resources. Preparedness levels will be utilized by all wildland fire management agencies within the Southwest to guide the readiness of fire resources. These preparedness levels provide interagency coordination of pre-suppression, suppression and fire management capabilities.

This plan serves three primary functions:

1. To coordinate workforce and equipment needs for wildfire suppression and fire use activities.
2. To ensure that fire management activities are integrated and coordinated with Southwest Area and national needs.
3. To ensure coordinated step-up activities that are efficient and proportional to fire hazard, risk, and the overall situation complexity.

B. Definitions

Fire Use. Wildland fire use or prescribed fire applications utilized to meet fuel hazard reduction and resource objectives.

Prescribed Fire. Any fire ignited by management action to meet specific objectives. A written, approved prescribed fire burn plan must exist, and NEPA requirements must be met prior to ignition.

Predictive Services Areas (PSAs). Regions of roughly similar fuels, weather and topography where a statistical correlation has been established between historical fire occurrence and selected NFDRS stations. There are 16 PSAs in the Southwest.

Significant Fire Potential. The likelihood a fire situation will require mobilization of additional resources from outside the area in which the fire situation originates. This can be applied to PSAs, Dispatch Zones and/or Geographic Area.

SWA 3-Day Average Severity Curve. The Energy Release Component (ERC), derived from representative NFDRS stations throughout the area, is averaged over each 3-day period to obtain an area-wide, 3-day average severity curve.

Wildland Fire. Any non-structure fire, other than prescribed fire, that occurs in the wildland. This term encompasses all wildland fires, which are all managed using the appropriate management response (AMR).

Wildland Fire Use. The management of naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish pre-stated resource management objectives in predefined areas outlined in fire management plans. Wildland fire use is not to be confused with “Fire Use.”

7-Day Significant Fire Potential Outlook. A 7-day outlook of significant fire potential for each of the Southwest Area PSAs which integrates fuels and weather information into classifications related directly to the potential for significant fire activity. The table below relates historical fire occurrence and probabilities for significant fire activity to the outlook classifications.

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Fire Potential Color Classification	Significant Fire Risk Description	Historical Significant Fires in Color Class	Chance of Significant Fire (Given 100 or More Ignitions)
Green (Moist)	Little or none	9%	≤ 3%
Yellow (Dry)	Low	30%	7%
Brown (Very Dry)	Moderate	60%	13%
Red (High Risk)	High	1%	20% (estimated)

C. Fire Preparedness Level Determination Procedures. The Southwest Coordination Center Manager will use this plan to guide the setting of the overall preparedness level (PL) for the Southwest Area, but consult with the SWCG during PLs 3-5. Preparedness levels are basically determined by:

- Condition of the fuels and their resultant burning characteristics.
- Existing and forecast significant fire potential, weather patterns.
- Fire activity, prescribed and wildland, both within and outside the Southwest Area.
- Resource availability, within and outside the Southwest Area.

D. National Preparedness Levels may suggest that Southwest Area preparedness levels be raised due to a large number of resources being out of the area and unavailable for Southwest response.

E. Using the Plan. Each preparedness level requires specific actions, assigned to certain positions or organizations. Once a preparedness level has been established, the responsible individuals will carry out their assignments without further notification. Each SWCG member will be responsible to coordinate the activities triggered by the preparedness level, upon the lands and staffing within their agency's jurisdiction. The Southwest Area Predictive Services Unit will monitor Southwest factors daily. When Preparedness Levels 1 and 2 are exceeded, the Predictive Services Unit Leader will consult with the SWCC Center Manager, who will initiate more careful evaluation of the situation and take or recommend appropriate actions.

26.2 Preparedness Level Step-Up Plan

26.2.1 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL 1

Description - Conditions are not conducive for frequent large fire growth in most of the Geographic Area. Winter or rain conditions or green fuel conditions predominate. Normal fire resource staffing is adequate.

All of the following occur for the SWA to be at PL-1:

- A. No more than six Southwest Units reporting fire danger of high or above, from "SW Units Reporting High-Extreme Fire Danger" on the SW NFDRS Web page.
- B. SWA 3-Day Average ERC Severity Curve is below 50% (value 50). Utilize SIG – SWA 12-station, NFDRS Model 7G.

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C. Fire activity within the Southwest Area is light, and large fires are of short duration. There is little or no commitment of Southwest Area and/or national resources. No significant support to the National Response Plan.

D. Southwest “7-Day Significant Fire Potential Outlooks” indicate a maximum of four PSAs at consistently moderate (brown) or high (red) risk for significant fire activity.

Special Prescribed Fire Direction. The contingency plan is the portion of the prescribed fire plan that considers possible but unlikely events, and the contingency resources and actions needed to mitigate those events. The contingency plan will establish management action points or limits that indicate when additional holding resources and actions are needed. The Rx Burn Boss will verify and document the availability of identified contingency resources and response time on the day of implementation. If contingency resources availability falls below plan levels, actions must be taken to secure operations until identified contingency resources are replaced. While contingency resources may be identified for more than one prescribed fire, the local fire management organization(s) must evaluate and document adequacy of all contingency resources in the area. Once a contingency resource is committed to a specific wildland fire action (wildfire, wildland fire use, or prescribed fire), it can no longer be considered a contingency resource for another prescribed fire project, and a suitable replacement contingency resource must be identified or the ignition halted. The dispatch center should be included in the list of planned contingency resources. (See “Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide,” July 2008, Page 25).

Responsibility – PL-1	Action Items
<i>Southwest Coordinating Group</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Recruit/select staff for Incident Management Teams.2. Review and update the Annual Operating Plans for the State Master Agreements.3. Delegate authority to the SWCC Center Manager to carry out interagency functions at SWCC.4. Review and revise the SWCG handbook.
<i>SWCC Center Manager</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Review and update the “SWCC Operations Guide” and provide update to the SWCG for comments. Lead and coordinate the annual revision of the “Southwest Area Mob Guide.”2. Pre-position National fire radio cache systems at Silver City and Prescott.3. Review and make recommendations on operating plans for mobilization centers in the Southwest Area.4. Review, revise or develop memorandums of understanding or agreements between the Southwest Area and other Geographic Areas as needed.5. Followup with dispatch centers to assure preseason agreements are completed; provide assistance where needed.

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6. Monitor weekly situation reports, fire activity levels, and resource availability.
7. Notify NICC, Southwest Area Dispatch Centers, and the SWCG of any major incidents.
8. Participate in zone fire preparedness staff inspections throughout the Southwest Area.

Zone Coordinating Group

1. Organize Type 3 management organizations. Encourage interagency IMT involvement by zone firefighters.
2. As needed, review and update zone annual operating plans and provide copies to SWCC.
3. Delegate authority to the zone center manager to manage the dispatch center and implement annual operating plans.

Dispatch Center Manager

1. Review “Dispatch Center Operating Plan” with the Zone Coordinating Group and make recommendations as necessary.
 2. As needed, develop zone Interagency Hotshot Crew and Southwestern Forest Fire Fighter Crew rotation schedules.
 3. Develop and maintain seasonal fire severity charts, pocket cards.
 4. Assure preseason agreements are completed, provide assistance where needed.
 5. Inform SWCC daily of any occurring or planned prescribed fires and resource commitments to these treatments.
 6. Notify SWCC and involved Southwest Area dispatch centers of major incidents.
 7. Assure flight following practices are adhered to.
 8. Prioritize fire management actions to optimize suppression effectiveness within the zone and encourage units to utilize appropriate management response (AMR) strategies.
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26.2.2 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL 2

Description - Resources within local dispatch areas are adequate. Potential exists for some mobilization of additional resources from other local dispatch areas. Some minor support to the National Response Plan may be occurring.

For the SW to be at PL-2, three of the following must be met:

- A. Six to 18 Southwest Units report fire danger of high or above, from “SW Units Reporting High-Extreme Fire Danger” on the SW NFDRS Web page.

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- B. SWA 3-Day Average ERC Severity Curve is between 50% and 90% (values 50 to 75). Utilize SIG – SWA 12-station, NFDRS Model 7G.
- C. Numerous Class A, B, and C fires (lets put in actual size in acres of this range) are occurring and potential exists for larger fires to be active for more than one burning period.
- D. Several Type 3 incidents per week are occurring, and there is an increasing fire danger trend over the next 2 weeks.
- E. Southwest 7-Day Significant Fire Potential Outlooks indicate five to seven PSAs at consistently moderate (brown) or high (red) risk for significant fire activity.

Special Prescribed Fire Direction. The contingency plan is the portion of the prescribed fire plan that considers possible but unlikely events and the contingency resources and actions needed to mitigate those events. The contingency plan will establish management action points or limits that indicate when additional holding resources and actions are needed. The Rx Burn Boss will verify and document the availability of identified contingency resources and response time on the day of implementation. If contingency resources availability falls below plan levels, actions must be taken to secure operations until identified contingency resources are replaced. While contingency resources may be identified for more than one prescribed fire, the local fire management organization(s) must evaluate and document adequacy of all contingency resources in the area. Once a contingency resource is committed to a specific wildland fire action (wildfire, wildland fire use, or prescribed fire), it can no longer be considered a contingency resource for another prescribed fire project, and a suitable replacement contingency resource must be identified or the ignition halted. The dispatch center should be included in the list of planned contingency resources. (See “Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide,” July 2008, Page 25).

Responsibility – PL-2	Action Items in Addition to Level 1
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Southwest Coordinating Group

1. Ensure Type 1 Incident Management Team Southwest on-call schedule is active.
2. Coordinate the issuance of press releases that highlight interagency current conditions and a brief outlook.
3. Consider “normality” of fire season and if early/late activation of Type 2 and FUMTs is warranted.

SWCC Center Manager

1. As needed, activate 7-day operations for SWCC.
2. Expand SWCC operations to provide proper staffing of the Resource and Intelligence desks for 13- to 16-hour coverage, as needed.
3. Initiate submission of daily area situation report.
4. Compile and distribute resource availability within the Southwest Area, daily or weekly, as necessary.
5. Contact National Weather Service offices to activate twice daily Fire Weather Forecasts.
6. As needed, initiate and maintain Area-wide Severity Chart, SIT300 (IMT & crews), and SIT300A (aviation), Morning Intelligence Report, News & Notes, ROSS reports, and Unable to Fill List.

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7. Utilize SWCC staff to perform and distribute preseason risk assessments during periods of escalating risk going into the fire season.

Zone Coordinating Group

1. Consider activating intelligence specialist(s) for zone.
2. Coordinate the issuance of press releases that highlight current interagency conditions and a brief outlook.
3. Ensure interagency coordination of fire use incidents is occurring.

Dispatch Center Manager

1. Consider activation of 7-day operation of the dispatch center. Expand dispatch center operations to provide for proper staffing as needed.
 2. Ensure computer software is up to date, there is sufficient support to keep computers and telecommunications operational, and that backup systems are in place to prevent disruption during busy periods.
 3. Compile and submit daily zone situation report.
 4. Initiate conference calls if needed to members of the Zone Coordinating Group to discuss the situation. Frequency of the conference calls and/or meetings to be determined by the Zone Coordinating Group.
 5. Monitor area-wide severity index with increased attention to an upward trend. Encourage interagency coordination of severity requests. Remind units to post approved requests on SWCC Web site.
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26.2.3 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL 3

Description - Resources within some local dispatch areas are short, requiring frequent mobilization of additional SW and national resources. Large fires occurring frequently and potential for IMT mobilization is regularly present. Fire behavior is escalating and of concern to multiple agencies and fire managers.

For the SW to be at PL-3, three of the following must be met:

- A. Eighteen to 24 Southwest Units report fire danger of high or above, from “SW Units Reporting High-Extreme Fire Danger” on the SW NFDRS Web page.
- B. SWA 3-Day Average ERC Severity Curve is between 90% and 97% (value 75 to 85). Utilize SIG – SWA 12-station, NFDRS Model 7G.
- C. High potential exists for fires becoming 100 acres or larger in brush or timber fuel types.
- D. There is potential for two or more units to experience incidents requiring a major commitment of area/national resources. Numerous additional resources are being ordered through SWCC; competition for resources exists between local area dispatch centers. Support of area resources to the National Response Plan may be moderate.

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E. Southwest 7-Day Significant Fire Potential Outlooks indicate 7 to 11 PSAs at consistently moderate (brown) or high (red) risk for significant fire activity.

Special Prescribed Fire Direction. Units considering prescribed fire activities must be prepared for the event that contingency resources may not be available when requested due to fire activity within the area. Constant communications and coordination must be maintained with the zone dispatch center.

Responsibility – PL-3	Action Items in Addition to Levels 1 and 2
<i>Southwest Coordinating Group</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consider establishing interagency fire information specialist(s) for SWCC. Consider establishing SWCC training coordinator to work with zones and incidents to direct and place Geographic Area trainees to facilitate accelerated training experiences.2. Initiate requests for state or regional level severity funds.3. Consider activation of MAC Group if resource competition, incident workload, or agency interests indicates need. Consider designation of ready reserve firefighting resources if situations are escalating or resources are short.4. Consider funding and use of cooperative fire prevention/ education team(s) (NIMG 22.5.10).5. Work with agencies to stage or place critical resources in high risk areas.6. Individual members monitor agency incidents to ensure utilization of the appropriate management response (AMR).
<i>SWCC Center Manager</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Operate SW Area Coordination Center on a 24-hour basis, as needed.2. Prioritize fire suppression actions to optimize suppression effectiveness by using appropriate logistical strategies.3. Initiate conference calls to members of the SWCG to discuss current situations, if they are complex. Frequency of the conference calls and/or meetings to be determined by the group. MAC group activation may be indicated.4. Monitor the implementation of fire restrictions and closures throughout the Southwest Area.5. Maintain one-half of contract helicopters within the Southwest Area for initial attack.6. Attempt to locate four heavy air tankers to be available for response to the Southwest Area for initial attack if headed into the season. Work with agencies on SEAT placement and needs. SWCC will monitor the status of all SW aviation resources.7. Maintain at least two hotshot crews per state for initial attack support.

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8. Activate a Southwest fire behavior analyst at SWCC if helpful, based upon need and severity. Maintain general awareness of WFDSS activities as related to area prioritization and incident potential.
9. Coordinate conference calls with all zone center managers.
10. Maintain daily communication/coordination calls with all IMTs on active incidents. Monitor accelerating T3 incidents.
11. Determine seasonal availability dates of SWFF and T2 crews.
12. Monitor the availability status of Southwest Type 1 crews.
13. Notify SWCG Chair and SWCG members of the escalating situation if it appears that the PL level will go beyond PL-3.

Zone Coordinating Group

1. Encourage and coordinate interagency requests for severity funds as parameters allow.
2. Initiate, as needed, fire restrictions and closures and associated interagency coordination procedures.
3. Maintain close coordination of all fire use activities, including resource needs.

Dispatch Center Manager

1. As needed, operate zone dispatch center on a 24-hour basis.
 2. Through Zone Coordinating Group, monitor the implementation of fire restrictions and closures.
 3. Prepare daily morning management briefing paper.
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26.2.4 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL 4

Description - Resources are fully and frequently being mobilized in some areas; initial attack is unsuccessful on a daily basis. Aviation resources are critical to success. Some dispatch areas are extremely busy and IMT fires occurring regularly. Resources have to be actively managed and agencies consulted regularly. Large fire behavior is high or extreme; threats to life and property are high, as is agency and fire manager concern.

For the SW to be at PL-4, three of the following must be met:

- A. Twenty-four or more Southwest Units report fire danger of high or above, from “SW Units Reporting High-Extreme Fire Danger” on the SW NFDRS Web page.
- B. SWA 3-Day Average ERC Severity Curve is 97% or higher (value 85 or higher). Utilize SIG – SWA 12-station, NFDRS Model 7G. Or NM or AZ 3-Day Average ERC Severity Curve is above 97%. Utilize NM or AZ SIG, NFDRS Model 7G.
- C. Fires of 100 acres or larger are common.

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D. There is significant competition for area resources, and national resources located in the Southwest Area. The potential exists to utilize all available area and national resources located in the Southwest Area, and to significantly impact national resources in other geographic areas. Support to the National Response Plan may be causing competition for firefighting resources.

E. Southwest 7-Day Significant Fire Potential Outlooks indicate 12 or more PSAs at consistently moderate (brown) or high (red) risk for significant fire activity.

Responsibility – PL-4	Actions Items in Addition to Levels 1-3
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Southwest Coordinating Group

1. Prioritize fire suppression actions to optimize suppression effectiveness within the SW Area. Encourage units to effectively utilize the appropriate management response (AMR). Activate MAC when resource competition and agency interests indicate a need.
2. Wildland fire use and prescribed fire applications can be initiated or continued if the proposed action is approved by an agency at the Regional or State office level. This approval must be based on an assessment of risk, impacts of the proposed actions on area resources and activities, and include feedback from the SW MAC. SW MAC members will provide information or perspectives to agencies wishing to proceed with or implement a wildland fire use or prescribed fire application. The final decision to implement resides with the implementing agency.
3. The SWCG or Southwest Area MAC Group will manage the assignment of all Incident Management Teams within the Southwest; Type 2 teams will normally be kept within the Geographic Area when the SW is at PL-4 and above. Consider the prepositioning of IMTs or other critical resources, especially in escalating risk situations. Designate ready reserve resources if firefighting resource shortages are developing. Consider requiring incident release advance notification for firefighting resources, pending active reassignments.
4. Consider requesting agency management to make all non-critical, fire-qualified staff available for fire support in the Southwest; especially if it appears there will be an extended period of escalating and increasing fire activity with resource shortages.

SWCC Center Manager

1. Request SWCG activate the MAC when complex fire incidents, resource competition, agency issues, or other complexities develop. Coordinate conference line, MAC room, activation of MAC group coordinator and other specialists in consultation with SWCG chair.
2. Notify NICC and all SWA dispatch centers when MAC Group is operational. Notify Incident Commanders of call in protocols, reporting template.
3. Pre-position additional initial attack resources in strategic locations.
4. Provide SWCG/MAC with current resource availability, assignments, and potential shortages.

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5. Ensure that adequate coverage of all essential SWCC functions is occurring for long duration stays at PL-4 and 5, and that SWCC staff get adequate rest. Ensure SWCC and Zones have adequate trainees to develop personnel for the future staffing of centers.

Zone Coordinating Group

1. Coordinate with agency heads the SW MAC direction to carefully consider, and receive Regional or State office approval, for any initiation or continuance of prescribed or wildland fire use fires.
 2. Active zones may need to convene mini-MAC group to prioritize resources and actions on fires. Regular consultation with SWCG liaison and SWCC center manager is needed.
 3. Determine interagency need for additional area closures and restrictions.
 4. Ensure Zone Coordinating Group chair or acting is continuously available to zone center manager(s), agency representatives, and SWCG agency liaison. Consider extra help if agency representatives availability is overtaxed due to local fire activity.
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26.2.5 PREPAREDNESS LEVEL 5

Description - Fire resources throughout the SW Area are almost fully committed. Higher level of initial attack is unsuccessful. Use of aviation resources is essential for initial attack and large fire support. Numerous dispatch areas are at full operational level. Almost or all SW IMTs are in use. Large fire behavior is high or extreme; threats to life and property are multiple and complex. Agency and fire manager concern is consuming.

For the SW to be at PL-5, at least two of the following must be met:

- A. Several zones are experiencing major fires, and critical national resources are fully utilized. Additional firefighting resources and support may not be available, or their arrival is delayed for multiple operational periods.
- B. Initial attack success is compromised in some areas.
- C. Most SW Incident Management Teams are committed to incidents within the Southwest Area. Support to the National Response Plan may be high.
- D. Fire behavior is severe enough that control efforts are often compromised due to advanced or extreme fire behavior or extreme spotting conditions. These conditions are widespread in the geographic area.
- E. The military or national guard is needed or may be tasked for assistance.

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Responsibility – PL-5

Action Items in Addition to Levels 1-4

Southwest Coordinating Group

1. Add Military or National Guard Liaison to MAC Group if military or national guard is activated.
 2. Consider establishing MAC and FEMA representative relationship.
 3. Consider contacts/involvement with state level Homeland Security Departments.
 4. Continue to pre-position Incident Management Teams, ready reserve or critical resources, as needed.
 5. Take additional steps to assure that all Agency administrators are advised of all current and predicted activities.
 6. Ensure Southwest liaison to NMAC is informed and up to date so that national level help is available and coordinated.
 7. Conduct close monitoring of Southwest Area resources to assure that they are getting appropriate rest and recovery time.
 8. Wildland fire use and prescribed fire application can be continued or initiated if the proposed action is approved at the Regional or State office level. The incident agency representative will assess risk and impacts of the proposed actions and discuss with the SW MAC. This group will have an opportunity to provide information or perspectives to agencies wishing to proceed with or implement a WFU or prescribed fire application. The final decision to implement resides with the implementing agency.
 9. Consider what help SW MAC can establish or offer to active agencies, zones, dispatch centers, or zone coordinating/MAC groups to assist in their success.
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SWCC Center Manager

1. Identify and staff additional staging areas for IMTs and other resources, as needed.
 2. Pay specific attention to fire information staffing at the Geographic Area level to ensure media and political managers are getting updated and correct fire effort information. Make suggestions to SW MAC if shortfalls identified.
 3. Observe busy zone dispatch centers and suggest mobilization of additional resources for help, if indicated.
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